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## **Market Brief - Sector**

# **Russian Federation: Moscow Market for Kosher Foods**

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Moscow [RS1], RS

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## **Summary**

The number of people who regularly purchase and eat kosher foods in Russia is extremely small, no more than several hundred according to one Moscow rabbi. The vast majority of practicing Jews in Russia, as in the United States, observe the dietary laws in general, but buy kosher foods only occasionally. Prices for packaged, non-refrigerated, kosher foods like cookies, candies, long-life juices, canned goods and condiments are essentially the same as prices for identical non-kosher items. Prices for kosher dairy and meat products, however, are extremely high compared with similar non-kosher items. For Russian consumers of kosher foods, price is the most important factor. Most consumer-ready kosher products are imported from Israel and the United States. Popular kosher items include the following: candies, both chocolate and non-chocolate, cakes/crackers/biscuits and cookies, dry soup-in-a-cup mixes, and wines.

The total Jewish population in Russia is around one million. Moscow is home to Russia's largest Jewish community with a population of about half million. The Jewish population of St. Petersburg is next in size after Moscow's. Russia's other cities have no Jewish populations of any significant number. There are very few practicing Jews living in the Jewish Autonomous Republic in the Russian Far East.

## **Kosher foods in Moscow**

Kosher foods are sold in three stores and several supermarkets in Moscow. Two stores are located at synagogues. One store is not a store at all but a table in an outdoor parking lot where cow or steer are slaughtered by a kosher butcher according to the kosher tradition. Meat is not available every day. The other store which features kosher items is actually a regular "gastronom," about one-half the size of a U.S. suburban convenience store. The kosher section consists of two small refrigerated cases and 30 to 40 feet of shelf space. The products sold are listed in the next section, with prices and notes on relative popularity. Not surprisingly, visits to a half-dozen kiosks and two more gastronomes did not reveal any kosher products for sale.

Prices for packaged, non-refrigerated, kosher foods like cookies, candies, long-life juices, canned goods and condiments are essentially the same as prices for identical non-kosher items. For Russian consumers of kosher foods, price is the most important consideration. At the gastronom where kosher products are sold, the impact of price on demand was very evident. Some products were in low supply because of high demand — the lower the price, the faster the product sold. Throughout Russia, consumers are extremely price-sensitive. One product that sells extremely well throughout Russia, including to consumers of kosher foods, is dried cup-of-soup mixes - a styrofoam cup of dried noodle soup to which hot water is added.

American kosher foods have no brand recognition in Moscow. Orthodox Jews and other strict observers of Jewish dietary laws buy fresh meat, and occasionally frozen meat, but never processed meat. Fresh kosher meats in Moscow are all domestic. Fresh kosher chickens sell for about \$4 per kilo, and fresh kosher beef for about \$7 per kilo. In the gastronom, one smoked chicken was for sale at \$15 per kilo. The market for fresh kosher meats is also very small. Very little kosher fish is sold in Moscow; what little that is sold is imported from Israel at extremely high prices.

According to the director of a small shop of kosher foods at one of Moscow synagogues,

Orthodox Jews prefer kosher foods from Israel to American kosher foods. This shop was opened at a synagogue about 3 years ago with only 4 to 5 kosher products on the shelves. Today, there are more than 100 items, significantly more than some larger Moscow supermarkets have. According to the store manager, there are no regular distribution channels for kosher foods in Moscow. To get new products on the shelves requires visits to other wholesalers and supermarkets. Most Russian Jewish consumers cannot afford to buy the more expensive kosher foods. The market is targeted primarily to wealthy Jews from Georgia, foreign specialists working in Moscow, and tourists from the West.

## **List of Kosher products for sale in Moscow**

Below is a list of kosher food items found in Moscow.

### **Baby food**

Beechnut, in jars, 3.8 rubles (\$.70) for 4 oz and 6 oz sizes. Mixed fruits, mixed vegetables, some meat dinner mixes. The 6 oz sizes sell by far the fastest, since they are cheaper on a unit basis. Beechnut, dry, 8 rubles (\$1.30), about 400 gr., various flavors (kasha).

### **Long-life juices**

Sunpride, in liter boxes, 8.5 rubles (\$1.30). Pineapple, grapefruit, orange, tomato. Grapefruit and orange are the most popular.

### **Oil**

Mazola, corn oil, 18.6 rubles (\$3) per quart.

### **Soups, dry**

OSEM (Israel), in styrofoam cup, 7 to 7.5 rubles each (\$1 to \$1.20). Four types: noodles with veggies, mushrooms, or chicken; and tomato. OSEM (Israel), in foil packets, 4 types: tomato, lentil, vegetable, chicken noodle; 55 gr, 5.2 to 7.5 rubles (\$.95 to \$1.20) per packet.

### **Snack foods**

Pretzels. OSEM (Israel), 80 gr. 3.5 rubles (\$.60). 200 gr. 7.6 rubles (\$1.20).

Cookies. OSEM. Chocolate, strawberry or apricot filled vanilla cake-like cookie. 9.8 rubles for 400 gr. (\$1.60 for 14 oz). Crackers. OSEM. Cream crackers, extremely popular, 250 gr, 8.4 rubles (\$1.40 for 8.8 oz).

### **Confectionery**

Candies. Various brands of boxed chocolates, some less expensive than the same brands of non-kosher items in other gastronoms. For example, 135 gr. 12.4 rubles (\$2 for 5 oz) for blueberry-filled chocolates. The blueberry candies are more popular than the cherry-filled candies, because the blueberry candies are slightly different and exotic, whereas cherries are practically the Russian national fruit.

### **Dried fruit**

Raisins. Sunmaid, approx 6 oz., 9 rubles (\$1.45).

Prunes. Sunsweet, approx 6 oz. for 13.6 rubles (\$2.20).

### Jams (Israel)

Strawberry and grape, about 5 oz jars for 9.2 rubles and 11.2 rubles (\$1.50 and \$1.80 respectively); strawberry is more popular (lower priced), but both sell well.

### Spices/Condiments

Prices around \$.40 to \$.90 in 1-3 oz plastic bags.

Ketchup (Israel) - 12 rubles (\$1.90) per 0.5 kilo.

Horseradish (Israel) - 24 rubles (\$3.80) per 0.250 kilo.

Horseradish (USA) - 18 rubles (\$2.90) per 0.250 kilo.

### Canned foods

Olives, cucumbers (Turkey). Olives 540 gr (1 lb 3 oz) 9.4 rubles (\$1.50). Cucumbers, same size, 5.8 rubles (\$0.95).

### Beverages

Instant coffee (Israel) - 78 rubles (\$12.60) per 0.113 kilo.

Sprite, Cola, 7Up (Russia) - 6 rubles (\$0.96) per 330 ml.

### Alcoholic beverages.

GOLF (Israel). 330 ml. can (About 11 oz), \$1.00 per can, four flavors: vodka with lemon or apple flavors; grapefruit drink with rum; and orange drink with gin, which is the most popular.

Vodka Keglevich (Israel) - 32 rubles (\$5.20) per 710 ml., four flavors

Carmel Vineyards (Israel) - 31 to 55 rubles (\$5.00 to \$8.90) per 710 ml., seven flavors

### Dairy products

Kefir, imported from Brooklyn in half-liter and liter plastic jars, at 6 times the local price (24 rubles vs. 4 rubles per liter for local non-kosher kefir, or \$3.80 compared to \$.65.

Edy's ice cream - 31 rubles (\$5) per 0.5 kilo.

Cheese (Georgia, FSU) - 50 rubles (\$8) per kilo.

Cheese (Israel) - 15 rubles (\$2.40) per 0.250 kilo.

Mayonnaise (Israel) - 16 rubles (\$2.90) per 0.5 kilo.

### Meat and meat products

Beef on bones - 30 rubles (\$4.80) per kilo.

Beef (boneless) - 45 rubles (\$7.30) per kilo.

Ground beef - 45 rubles (\$7.30) per kilo.

Sausage (kielbasa) - 35 to 51 rubles (\$5.60 to \$8.20) per 0.5 kilo.

Chicken francs - 26 rubles (\$4.20) per 0.5 kilo.

Poultry - Chicken - 25 rubles (\$4) per kilo.